



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Margie A. Emmermann:

Good morning,

“Do you know how far it is to the Grand Canyon?”

This is the most frequently asked question by visitors to the Visitor Information Center at the Phoenix Convention Center, where nearly **8,000 travelers** were welcomed in 2008. This week marks the first-year anniversary of the center, which is a strategic alignment between AOT and the Greater Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau.

This state-of-the-art facility houses thousands of brochures representing every region of the state and innovative technologies such as nine LCD television monitors that highlight Arizona’s majestic beauty, and an interactive map that shows the way to these Arizona destinations.

Along with our partners at the GPCVB, we look forward to another incredible year of welcoming visitors to the state.

...Oh, by the way, the Grand Canyon is 228 miles away from the VIC.

Have a good week.

AOT News

AOT Leads Tour Operators on Tour through Arizona

Hylton Fothergill, Travel Industry Marketing Manager, escorted a group of six tour operators on a three-day Arizona familiarization tour. The group represented tour operators from Germany, Sweden, and the United States. They had stays in Monument Valley and Window Rock and made

stops at Canyon de Chelly National Monument, the Navajo National Monument, Monument Valley Tribal Park and the Explore Navajo Interactive Museum.

For more information, please contact Hylton Fothergill 602-364-3706 at via e-mail at hfothergill@azot.gov.

Colorado River Indian Tribe

Poston Memorial Monument

A Look into U.S. History

Serving as a silent reminder to the events that once occurred on the land on which it stands, the Poston Memorial Monument offers visitors a glimpse into United States history.



Located in Arizona's western region on the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) Reservation, the Poston Memorial Monument marks the site of the Poston War Relocation Center where more than 18,000 people of Japanese ancestry, most of whom were U. S. citizens, were interned during World War II.

The monument also emphasizes the significant links and relationships between the Japanese American detainees and the Colorado River Indian Tribes.

During May 1942 to November 1945, all persons of Japanese descent living on west coast farms, businesses, towns, cities, and states were forcibly evacuated by the United States military on the grounds that they posed a threat to national security. This massive relocation was authorized by Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942.

Three camps were developed at Poston and served not only as a place to house these detainees, but the infrastructure created by and for them also served Native Americans from surrounding smaller reservations to the much larger and sparsely populated Colorado River Indian Tribes reservation after the war.

The Japanese detainees held at the three Poston Camps were used as laborers to build adobe schools, do experimental farming, and to construct an irrigation system that could later be used by the Native Americans thus aiding the settlement of the area as planned by the Office of Indian Affairs (known today as the Bureau of Indian Affairs).

When the Japanese detainees were released in 1945, attention turned to settling the camps with Native Americans. Hopi and Navajo tribes as well as other tribes living along the Colorado River tributaries moved into the barracks built for the Japanese detainees. They joined the Mohave who had lived on the reservation since its creation in 1865, and the Chemehuevi who arrived shortly after 1865. The tribes found a working canal system to irrigate farmland, school buildings, and many other necessities for their relocation. For some from the less developed areas of other reservations, it was a step up with running water and a chance to have a farm. For others who had lived in developed areas in their own homes it was a challenge.

Today, the Colorado River Indian Tribes is comprised of four tribes — the Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo. The once desolate Parker Valley, in which Poston is located, is a fertile expanse of thriving farmland.

Some buildings and artifacts of the Poston camps still remain. Some buildings are still in use. CRIT and former Poston detainees are working together to preserve the remaining historical buildings and important artifacts of Poston.

Information

For more information about the Poston Memorial, visit <http://www.postonalliance.org/default.htm>.

For more information about the Colorado River Indian Tribes, <http://www.crit-nsn.gov/>.

AOT Events

Upcoming Events

Event – Go West Summit

Date – January 26-29

Location – Albuquerque, New Mexico

Event – German Media Mission

Date – February 2-6

Location – Hamburg, Munich and Zurich

Event – AAA California Sales Mission

Date – February 9-13

Location – Southern California

Industry News

U.S. Travel Introduces Policy Agenda

One of the key drivers in the coming together of the Travel Business Roundtable and the Travel Industry Association to form the U.S. Travel Association earlier this month was to enable the entire travel community to have an even bigger and more unified voice in Washington. To that end, the U.S. Travel Association introduced the 2009 [legislative and policy agenda](#) to the media. President-elect Obama is inheriting two significant challenges: a struggling American economy and a negative global image of the United States. The U.S. Travel community is uniquely positioned to help the incoming administration address both of these sizeable challenges. At the same time, U.S. Travel will be making the case for why travel matters, not only to policymakers, but to business leaders and individuals as well.

Tax Revenue Down 13% in Prescott, Tourism Almost Steady

The financial picture is grim. According to both Mark Woodfill, the City of Prescott Budget and Finance Director, and Matt Dunbar, the Privilege Tax Supervisor, the Year to Date Taxable activity is down 13 percent over last year for the first six months of fiscal year 2009.

In Woodfill's memo to the City Manager and Council, he writes, "The largest declines are in the industries of contracting (33 percent), auto dealer sales (34 percent), and home furnishings stores (31 percent). These declines are due to economic conditions affecting these categories nationwide."

The number, in terms of dollars and cents, is big. Basically, the amount of money spent in Prescott was a staggering \$99,016,774 less in the first six months of fiscal year (FY) 2009 than in the first six months of FY 2008.

There are a couple of bright spots, however. First of all, the category of Building Materials, Hardware and Garden is up 66.8 percent. Why? Well, there's a new-ish hardware store in town: Lowe's. Unlike Home Depot, which is located on the Yavapai Indian Tribe's land. Home Depot also has a brand-new second location in Prescott Valley. Lowe's, on the other hand, is in the Prescott city limits and generates revenue for the city coffers.

And the Transient Lodging tax revenue is up by 45.33 percent. Some of that is due to the bed tax being raised from 2 percent to 3 percent by the voters in November, 2007. However, according to Gary Edelbrock, Chairman of the Prescott Area Coalition of Tourists (PACT), it's also an indicator that Prescott continues to be a desirable place to visit.

Edelbrock reports on the information he received, "We just got our bed tax numbers from the City of Prescott for the first five months of the fiscal year. The bed tax collection numbers are down 4.33 percent from a year ago, if you adjust for the extra 1 percent tax, and that 4.33 percent applies through the month of November."

Edelbrock notes that compared to other areas that calculate their numbers on an annual basis, Prescott's looking pretty good. "This flies in the face of places like Maricopa County, Phoenix and that greater area down there being down over 10 percent for the year (they calculate on an annual basis) and as high as 19 percent during some of their most recent months. And when you factor in that they had a SuperBowl in 2008, their year to year numbers are even worse than they appear on the surface." Edelbrock listed off other popular tourist areas in Arizona, "Sedona numbers are down, the numbers in Williams are down almost 50 percent, Flagstaff is down about 25 percent. So, Prescott is a tourist destination – when they come here, they spend money in our restaurants, our bars, our galleries, our mall, and they are paying sales tax. And when you consider the construction and automobiles are down over 20 percent, and our sales tax is down 13 percent, tourism is one bright spot in the City of Prescott."

Why is Prescott managing to keep their numbers up as high as they are? Edelbrock answered, "First of all, the New York Times is actually the first one in the United States, but we have had articles published in the Arizona Republic by their travel writers that Prescott, no matter if you drive a large SUV, it's a tank of gas away. That's coming in, going, and you can put your family of four, five, six and seven in that vehicle if you wish."

Edelbrock also notes the other attractions that Prescott offers, "And we also have all of our Arizona's Christmas City promotion, which is not reflected in that 4.33 percent number. We are a convenient one day, two day destination for a family that wants to get away. And people, even in

stressful times, do travel. They want to get away for a day, they just don't want to answer their phone."

So, is Edelbrock encouraged for the outlook for 2009? He nodded, "If we have our usual strong summer events, that being Memorial Day, the rodeo, 4th of July, events downtown, we just need to keep promoting it, and getting people to decide that Prescott's a good thing for them. It's a two hour drive from the valley, less than a tank of gas. I went to Phoenix recently, and I went for \$15 worth of gas. I was pretty excited about that myself. And after all, we have a back road through Wickenburg, that many people travel and come in from that area, and if there's a problem from I-17, and people are here in town, they can drive down through Wickenburg and escape much of that."

Edelbrock gave an example of what he means, "I had a guest last week, and he and his wife worked in the hospital respiratory unit in Las Vegas. And they just wanted one day to get away. They drove down and they said, 'We came in an SUV, and it's not even a tank of gas to come to Prescott.'" (*Prescott eNews*, by Lynne LaMaster, January 19, 2009, <http://prescottenews.com/news/current-news/tax-revenue-down-13-tourism-almost-steady.html>)

Sky Harbor Drops to 9th Busiest Airport in U.S.

As millions of passengers cut their travel budgets, Sky Harbor slipped down the FAA's ranking of busy U.S. airports. Phoenix [Sky Harbor International Airport](#) was the ninth busiest airport in 2008. In 2007, it was the eighth busiest.

Charlotte Douglas Airport, in Charlotte, N.C. is now No. 8. The [Federal Aviation Administration](#) ranking measures the number of takeoffs and landings by commercial airlines, air taxis, private planes and the military.

"This is a direct reflection of the economy and is unfortunately the way things are at airports across the country," said [Deputy Aviation Director](#) Deborah Ostreicher.

"One difference in Phoenix, however, is that we are in such a fast growing region, we are expecting a recovery sooner than other parts of the U.S. We need to be ready for this and continue planning accordingly," she said.

The most recent figures available show that passenger traffic at Sky Harbor International Airport dropped nearly 13 percent in November due to the [weak economy](#) and dramatic flight cutbacks by airlines. Phoenix wasn't the only airport to fall in the ranking, said Federal Aviation spokesman Ian Gregor. LAX in Los Angeles, which has long been the fourth busiest airport, is now the fifth busiest, he said. There was little movement in the top slots of the FAA list.

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Chicago O'Hare Airport and Dallas Fort Worth Airport, remained first, second and third respectively. (*The Arizona Republic*, by **Jahna Berry** - January 22, 2009)

Industry Hails Hillary Clinton's Approval as Secretary of State

The Senate overwhelming approved the nomination of Hillary Rodham Clinton as President Obama's secretary of state on Wednesday, after a one-day delay forced by Republicans who wanted to continue debating her husband's overseas fundraising activities. The delay had the effect of denying Clinton a confirmation vote on Inauguration Day, when six other Cabinet members were approved. But an hour after the vote, Clinton was sworn in as secretary of State and resigned her U.S. Senate seat. She took charge of the department and planned to meet with

State Department employees later today. The issue of Bill Clinton's charitable activities has been a concern for senators of both parties, who said that foreign governments and businesses could use donations to curry favor with the top U.S. diplomat. (www.LosAngelesTimes.com; Page 7A, USA Today)

The U.S. Travel Association (formerly the Travel Industry Association) issued a statement Wednesday hailing the confirmation of Sen. Clinton as secretary of state and her commitment to "smart power." "We support Senator's Clinton's 'smart power' goal for the new administration, and believe travel is an underused tool in America's public diplomacy efforts," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of U.S. Travel. "Welcoming more visitors to the United States should be a top priority for the State Department and entire Obama administration," Dow said in his statement. "We believe that this new administration, with its dedication to a fresh approach, should unlock the power of people-to-people diplomacy by creating a travel promotion program, expanding the Visa Waiver Program and improving the overall visa and entry experience for foreign visitors." (*Special to TA*)

International Visits Expected to Decrease

Despite the inauguration of a president who could generate warmer feelings--and more tourists--for the United States, the U.S. tourism industry is bracing for a decline in higher-spending international visitors. This year, the number of foreign visitors is expected to dip for the first time since 2003 as the economic collapse spreads and consumers worldwide curb spending. The U.S. Travel Association, formerly the Travel Industry Association, expects about 60 million foreigners this year, or 1.6 percent less than last year. America's gateway cities over the past two years had welcomed a rising flow of foreigners at hotels, restaurants, shops, parks and museums.

The gains were driven largely by the slide in the U.S. dollar's value; Europeans came for everything from cross-country vacations to four-day Christmas shopping sprees to take advantage of bargain prices. In a downturn, New York has the most to lose, followed by cities such as San Francisco, Miami, Chicago, Atlanta and Orlando, says Bjorn Hanson of New York University. Jonathan Tisch, chairman of Loews Hotels and former chairman of the Travel Business Roundtable, says there's anecdotal evidence that President Obama's inauguration could help the U.S.'s image abroad, but any boost associated with his election probably won't be enough. "There are many reasons our image is not what it used to be," he says. (*Page 5D, USA Today*)

Hotel Industry Prepares for Worst of Times

Hotel industry fortunes fell hard at the end of 2008, and the prospects for 2009 look grim as Americans cut travel spending and leave plenty of room at the inn. Hotel operators have seen room reservations fall drastically as business travelers and vacationers cut down on trips. In 2009, U.S. hotels will suffer one of the greatest annual declines in occupancy and revenue in history, according to analysts. In their suffering, however, many hotels will give travelers a break by lowering prices or offering incentives, such as free meals, in hopes of enticing more business. The lean times are expected to last into 2010 and follow several boom years. Most of the reasons revenue is slipping are obvious. Corporations are cutting back on travel expenses when they can, reducing the number of trips their employees take and often putting them up in cheaper hotels when they do travel. Companies also are axing group events such as out-of-town sales meetings and seminars, usually reliable sources of income for hotels. (www.ChicagoTribune.com/Business)

Cross-border Frequent Traveler Notice: CBP to Deactivate Older SENTRI Cards

CBP has been mailing new SENTRI cards to all members since July. The new cards have enhanced security features and allow U.S. citizen cardholders to comply with the documentary requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.

All members must activate their new cards within 30 days, verify and update their U.S. mailing address and confirm that their current license plate is correct by accessing the [Global Online Enrollment System](#) on the CBP Web site.

SENTRI members should destroy their old cards after activating their new ones. If members have not received their new cards, they should go to their local enrollment center to either pick up their new card or to apply to have a new card issued. The new card will be mailed to the member within seven to 10 business days. **Old cards will be deactivated January 26.**

[Calendar of Events](#)

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!